

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHKO #4273/01 2121028
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 311028Z JUL 06
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4833
INFO RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL PRIORITY
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 0168
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 0144
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 0228
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 0210
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0132
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 0183
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 0389
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA PRIORITY 0194
RUEHKU/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY 0279
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 0796
RUEHMS/AMEMBASSY MUSCAT PRIORITY 0044
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA PRIORITY 0111
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 0242
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 0439
RUEHYN/AMEMBASSY SANAA PRIORITY 0055
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 0621
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 0203
RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA PRIORITY 0015
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0026
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 0274

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 004273

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/31/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [LE](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: JAPAN TO PROVIDE HUMANITARIAN AID TO LEBANON

Classified By: Acting Political Minister Counselor Carol T. Reynolds.
Reasons: 1.4(B) and (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Japan will provide two million USD in emergency humanitarian aid to Lebanon, according to a July 29 MOFA announcement. Japan has taken a low-key approach to current events in Lebanon, issuing three official statements concerning the ongoing hostilities. The Japanese press is providing fairly evenhanded coverage of the fighting. Despite relatively good relations with Damascus, Tokyo is unlikely to bring serious pressure on the Assad regime to moderate its behavior toward Hezbollah. END SUMMARY.

JAPAN TO CONTRIBUTE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

12. (U) On July 29, the Japanese press reported that Tokyo will provide two million USD in emergency humanitarian assistance to Lebanon "where ordinary citizens and others have fallen victims" to Israel's attacks. According to MOFA contacts, the aid, which will be paid through the UN, is intended for international relief agencies and non-governmental organizations and is to be used to purchase water, food, blankets, and medical supplies. The decision to send this aid did not merit an official MOFA press release.

13. (C) According to the Lebanese Charge d'Affaires (CDA) in Tokyo, Dr. Toufic Jabar, the Japanese were slow to offer this aid, which, he claimed, came only after he made a personal appeal to former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, who called Prime Minister Koizumi, who then ordered that the aid be sent. Jabar continues to press the Japanese to do more, comparing the amount they are offering to the more generous amounts offered by other countries, including the United States.

OFFICIAL JAPANESE REACTION MUTED

14. (U) The official Japanese response to the events taking place in Lebanon and Israel has been limited to three relatively evenhanded statements. On July 13, MOFA issued a Press Secretary Statement calling on Hezbollah to release the two abducted Israeli soldiers, and calling on all parties, particularly Israel, to exercise self restraint, noting that Israeli strikes on the Beirut airport and civilian areas only serve to increase tensions and will not solve the underlying problems.

15. (U) On July 14, the Japanese Deputy PermRep to the UN issued a statement strongly condemning the attacks by Hezbollah. He acknowledged the legitimate security concerns of Israel, but strongly urged the Israelis to refrain from excessive use of force and, in particular, actions that endanger the Lebanese civilian population and infrastructure. He also quoted remarks made by Prime Minister Koizumi (who was visiting Israel at the outbreak of hostilities) that called on the importance of "achieving co-existence and mutual prosperity in the mid and long terms, rather than taking an 'eye for eye' approach."

16. (U) On July 26, following the Israeli strike that killed four U.N. peacekeepers, MOFA issued another statement regretting the deaths and expressing concern about the deteriorating situation, calling on Hezbollah to release the abducted soldiers and to cease firing missiles at Israel, and calling on Israel to exercise utmost restraint.

PRESS REPORTS FOCUS ON HUMAN SUFFERING

17. (U) The Japanese press has also covered the story in a non-political, non-provocative manner. However, incidents involving dramatic loss of life, such as the July 30 airstrike that resulted in the death of a large number of children and women, receive front page headlines. How Japan should respond, if at all, to the ongoing events in Lebanon and Northern Israel is not an issue in Japanese domestic politics.

COMMENT

18. (C) While the Japanese sympathize with the suffering of innocent civilians, primarily in Lebanon, the ongoing conflict there is only of passing interest. Government officials have not raised the issue with us and official statements concerning the conflict have been pro forma. Even Japan's decision to send aid seems to be the result of a personal appeal from the Lebanese CDA and did not merit an official announcement. To the extent that the Japanese are concerned, it is primarily out of humanitarian concern and unease that this latest fighting will serve to further destabilize the wider Middle East region. While Japan seems to pride itself on maintaining good relations with Syria, it is unlikely to bring serious pressure on the Assad regime to moderate its behavior toward Hezbollah.

SCHIEFFER